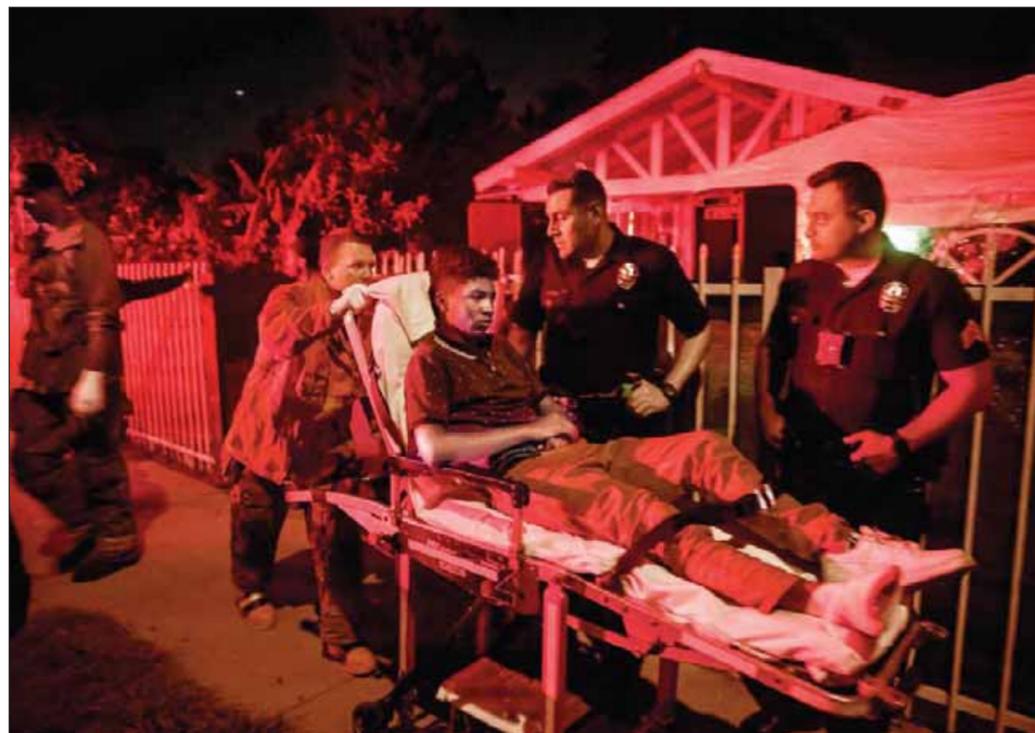


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POLICE AND first responders move quickly to transport to a hospital a boy who had been shot in the foot near Hawkins High School in South L.A. The effect of violence near campuses can be devastating and costly.

MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Bullet train's limited route on track to run out of money

Project's cost is likely to top the \$15.1 billion it can count on for a Central Valley system, Times analysis shows.

BY RALPH VARTABEDIAN

The California bullet train project will probably run out of money before it can fulfill Gov. Gavin Newsom's modest plan to build a high-speed operating segment between Bakersfield and Merced, according to a Times analysis of the state rail authority's financial records.

The governor declared his support for the scaled-back rail plan last month, saying that for the foreseeable future the original goal of a Los Angeles-to-San Francisco system would cost too much and had no path forward.

Instead, Newsom said, the state did have the "capacity" to build a 171-mile route through the almond orchards, orange groves, vineyards and oilfields of the Central Valley.

But the project faces many challenges, including an investigation by the in-

spector general for the U.S. Department of Transportation that has been looking into allegations of poorly controlled or improper spending by the California High-Speed Rail Authority in the Central Valley, according to individuals familiar with the probe.

The biggest problem, however, remains a limited pool of money for the complex project.

Newsom did not provide a cost estimate when he announced his plan to focus on a Bakersfield-to-Merced rail line. If no new problems emerge, the cost will run about \$16 billion to \$18 billion for structures, electrical lines, train stations, signals, a heavy maintenance facility and bullet trains, according to the rail authority's business plan and technical cost documents. Meanwhile, it can count on roughly \$15.1 billion through 2023 to build the Central Valley system, though it could collect more money in later years or the Legislature could increase funding.

A rail authority spokeswoman said the agency believes it has enough money to complete the operating system and will publish a project update in early May [See Rail, A10]

IN HARM'S WAY

Though mass shootings capture the headlines, students at many schools deal every day with physical or psychological trauma simply getting to campuses surrounded by violence

BY SONALI KOHLI AND IRIS LEE

Jaleyah Collier had just said goodbye to Kevin Cleveland outside a doughnut shop a few blocks from Hawkins High School on a spring afternoon in 2017. Get home safe, she told him before walking away.

Minutes later someone drove into an alley nearby, got out of the car and asked Kevin, 17, and two others about their gang affiliation. The gunman then sprayed them with at least 10 rounds, killing Kevin and wounding the others.

Jaleyah, then a high school sophomore, barely had time to grieve when a month later, her best friend, Alex Lomeli, 18, was shot and killed when someone tried to rob a market about a mile from the same high school, located at 60th and Hoover streets.

In the early hours of Mother's Day 2018, two other teens Jaleyah was close to, Monyae Jackson and La'marrion Upchurch, were walking home with friends when they were fatally shot near Dymally High School.

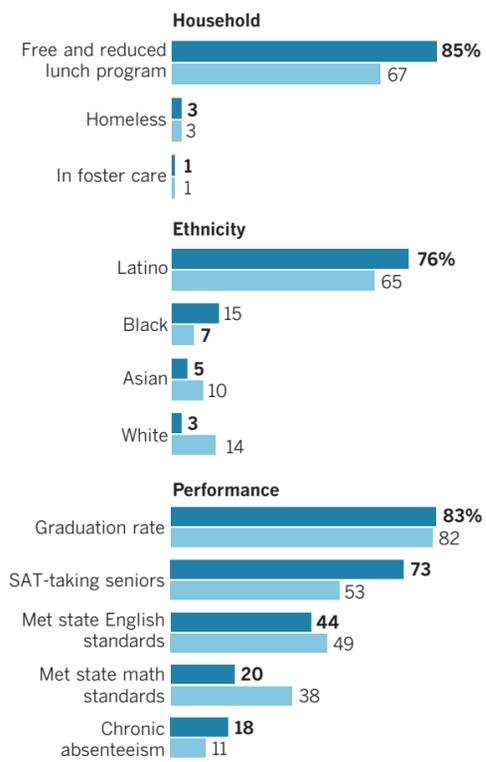
Each of Jaleyah's friends was killed within walking distance of public high schools in Los Angeles.

"You don't know when it's going to be a person's last day," said Jaleyah, a senior at the Community Health Advocates School, one of three small schools on the Hawkins campus. "[Kevin] woke up not knowing."

Campus comparisons

Students at schools with a high rate of nearby homicides are more likely to come from poverty and perform lower on state tests, but graduate at a similar rate to other L.A. County students.

- Schools where 50 or more homicides have occurred in a one-mile radius
- All schools in Los Angeles County



Sources: California Department of Education. Graphics reporting by IRIS LEE
PRIYA KRISHNARUMAR Los Angeles Times

While much of the recent national conversation on campus violence has focused on mass shootings, schools also are dealing with other physical and psychological harms that thousands of students experience directly or indirectly near campuses.

In Los Angeles County, at least one homicide occurred within a mile of 89% of public high school campuses, according to a Times analysis of data from 2014 through 2018. Fifteen campuses saw at least 50 homicides within a mile during those years.

The impact of that violence can be devastating and costly. Campuses have begun incorporating the inevitability of trauma into their curricula, addressing stress reduction and how to settle differences without resorting to violence. Students suffer symptoms resembling post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychiatric social workers are now a staple on many campuses. Because there is too little mental health funding to meet the need, teachers and staff are often on the front lines in identifying the warning signs of emotionally needy students.

One concern is practical: getting safely to and from school, avoiding not just bullets but gang flashpoints, street harassment, hit-and-runs and muggings. With limited district busing, some students opt for public transportation or other ride-sharing options. On [See Schools, A8]

Methane rise adds to climate threat

Scientists can't explain a surge in atmospheric levels of the potent greenhouse gas.

BY JULIA ROSEN

Twenty years ago, humanity's chances of slowing down climate change got a welcome boost when methane, a potent greenhouse gas, stopped building up in the atmosphere. But the concentration started rising again in 2007 — and new research shows that the pace has picked up over the last four years.

Scientists haven't figured out the cause, but they say one thing is clear: This surge could imperil the Paris climate accord. That's because many scenarios for meeting its goal of keeping global warming "well below 2 degrees Celsius" assumed that methane would be falling by now, buying time to tackle the long-term chal-

lenge of reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

"I don't want to run around and cry wolf all the time, but it is something that is very, very worrying," said Euan Nisbet, an Earth scientist at Royal Holloway, University of London, and lead author of a recent study reporting that the growth of atmospheric methane is accelerating.

Methane is produced when dead stuff breaks down without much oxygen around. In nature, it seeps out of waterlogged wetlands, peat bogs and sediments. Forest fires produce some too.

These days, however, human activities churn out about half of all methane emissions.

Leaks from fossil fuel operations are a big source, as is agriculture — particularly raising cattle, which produce methane in their guts. Even the heaps of waste that rot in landfills produce the gas.

[See Methane, A7]

Listen up, chaps: S.F.'s leather life won't fade away

City will build a plaza to fetish culture in an area that's faced duress since the 1970s.

BY MARIA L. LA GANGA

SAN FRANCISCO — When Dahn Van Laarz, a bearded 59-year-old in Levi's and a motorcycle jacket, walks the streets of San Francisco's official leather district, he finds it hard to avoid the ghosts.

The Club Baths, a once-busy gay bath house, has morphed into an even busier homeless shelter. The Bootcamp, a bar whose clientele favored leather, bondage, domination and sadomasochism, is now an acupuncture clinic.

And SF Catalyst, a

leather community center and dungeon just outside the district boundaries, must vacate its home by year's end. The brick dungeon — with ceilings high enough to swing a whip and a calendar filled with "BDSM sampler parties" and Leathermen's Discussion Group meetings — is scheduled to give way to apartments.

If Catalyst can't find a new home in this era of high property values and even higher rents, San Francisco will be left with only one commercial dungeon space.

So what's a big-hearted city to do when its standing as one of the leather capitals of the world is under siege? When its identity is shifting faster than you can demolish a historic building and plan a pricey condo tower in its [See Leather, A15]



JESSE SEGUIN, center, makes his way to SF Eagle, a well-known leather bar in San Francisco's recently sanctioned Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District.

MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

No charges for cops who killed Stephen Clark

Sacramento officers are cleared in shooting of unarmed black man. CALIFORNIA, B1

Director targets streaming films

Spielberg wants the Oscars competition to exclude certain projects. CALIFORNIA, B8

SpaceX's test launch a success

Capsule journey is key step toward a manned mission. NATION, A6

Weather: Partial sun. L.A. Basin: 63/51. B12

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.





MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

A PLAQUE in Ringold Alley, once a popular cruising destination for gay men, is now part of San Francisco's leather district in the South of Market neighborhood.



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

A HARNESS in a display case at Leather Etc on Folsom Street. Groundbreaking on Eagle Plaza, a public site to celebrate leather culture, is expected in the spring.



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

ROPE BONDAGE instructor MrKiltYou, center, holds a lab session at SF Catalyst with performer Bondage Otter, front, and trainee Johnny.

City plaza will celebrate leather life

[Leather, from A1] stead? When its freak flag, once proudly flying, has faded?

Last spring, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District in the South of Market neighborhood once known as the Valley of the Kings, a nod to its hyper-masculine gay clientele. And shortly after Valentine's Day, Mayor London Breed signed legislation to create what is believed to be the world's first public plaza celebrating the "strong cultural influence" of the fetish set.

The question is whether these and other efforts will be enough to save the subversive soul of the leather neighborhood, which has been under duress since the 1970s.

Van Laarz, founding president of the San Francisco Bay Area Leather Alliance and the cultural district's head of land use, hopes so.

Because future leathermen and leatherwomen need to know "that this culture has existed," he said, "to know that they have mentors that they can look up to, to understand that they can feel good about themselves as they come out into their kink."

When leather life was at its peak, the SoMa neighborhood supported about 30 businesses catering to aficionados of oh-so-not-vanilla sex. In the early 1980s, there were bath houses and bars, sex clubs and leather stores, publishing companies and restaurants.

Today, that number has shrunk to less than a dozen.

Van Laarz recently held forth on leather history and sexuality from a tree stump on the edge of tiny Ringold Alley. Ringold runs from 8th to 9th streets, bisecting the block between Harrison and Folsom streets, leather San Francisco's main drag.

Before the huge construction cranes came to roost, changing the San Francisco skyline for good, Ringold was a prime cruising destination, hidden and



Robert Pruzan Papers / GLBT Historical Society

MR. DRUMMER contestants with columnist Marcus Hernandez, in hat, in the 1980s. Before redevelopment, SoMa had several bars, sex clubs and leather shops.

dark. Men would prowl the alley after the bars closed, Van Laarz said, to "find that partner that they hadn't found at the bar and have a sexual experience in the great outdoors."

But the bus yard that bordered the alley's south side is gone, replaced by gated condominiums. The small houses and businesses on the north have bright porch lights. Today, Van Laarz said, "there is no place to stand, no shadow to hide in to be that mysterious stranger, that mysterious, sexual, attractive stranger."

Although redevelopment has been a constant theme in South of Market's dramatic evolution, the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s also ravaged the neighborhood. Then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein pushed for the bath houses to close. Van Laarz recalled a "sex panic" that kept healthy gay men away.

"The market died because people died," he said.

Ringold is now the site of the city's Leather History Walk, a pint-sized memorial. Brass boot prints are embedded in the sidewalk, inscribed with the names of the leather dead. There are engraved granite plinths made of repurposed curbstones. The pillars remem-

ber lost businesses and celebrate operations that have managed to last 20 years or more, such as Mr. S Leather — a purveyor of fine fetish gear, still going strong after 39 years.

Perhaps most striking are the bulb-outs, sidewalk extensions designed to calm traffic along the narrow lane. They are painted to resemble the leather pride flag: black and blue stripes bisected by a white stripe and a big red heart.

The black stripes represent BDSM, Van Laarz said. Blue stands for Levi's, a leatherman's wardrobe staple. The heart symbolizes "the heart and soul of leather people around the world."

And the white? He wracks his brain. In "hankie code," he says, white means a certain solo sex act. It could also mean consent.

Or inclusion.

In an essay, anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin pegs the beginning of modern leather to the late 1940s, when "butch gay men interested, sexually and socially, in other butch gay men" donned motorcycle gear and started bike clubs.

Today "leather" is a complicated umbrella covering straight and gay practi-

tioners of kinky sex, people who are into motorcycles and hyper-masculine gay men.

Leather-themed businesses, musicians and artists were drawn to industrial, working-class South of Market by low rents and the fact that it largely emptied out at night. But it also drew the attention of city planners and developers. Large swaths were razed to build the original Moscone Convention Center, which opened in 1981, office towers and high-rise hotels.

Development has only increased in recent years.

"Each time a new wave of this happens, people who aren't familiar with the history think it's the first time," said Rubin, an associate professor of anthropology and women's studies at the University of Michigan who worked on the Ringold Alley memorial.

But the pace of change here has jumped dramatically, said Gerard Koskovich of the GLBT Historical Society, which runs a museum in the Castro with a small corner devoted to local leather history.

Current-day San Francisco is like Paris in the mid-19th century, Koskovich said, recalling a line from Charles Baudelaire's poem

"The Swan" that memorialized the gutting of a working-class medieval quarter of that great capital: "The form of a city changes faster, alas! than the human heart."

"I think of that constantly," Koskovich said, "as I walk around the streets of San Francisco."

At a San Francisco Board of Supervisors land use and transportation committee hearing last spring, urban planning took a back seat to discrimination, poverty and the sense that the city seemed to have turned its back on some of those who made it special.

Item 2 on the agenda was "Establishment of the LGBTQ and Leather Cultural District," about two square miles in the heart of formerly industrial South of Market.

There were declarations of caution, like then-Supervisor Jane Kim's: "We don't want San Francisco to be a city of just the rich and the very rich and to look monolithic."

Declarations of pride, like David Hyman's: "Many of us believe that our exposure to leather culture has made us better, stronger, safer and more ethical and more interconnected."

And of hurt, like Rand Hunt's: "I went to high school in West Texas. ... Everyone in my town was a Southern Baptist and I feared for my life every day. ... I wanted to come to San Francisco because I knew I would be safe there and it was our capital city. ... And my [leather] culture is vanishing quickly."

Two speakers later, it was Jonathan Schroder's turn. He stated his name. And occupation, general manager of Mr. S Leather. And started to thank Kim for her remarks.

But she interrupted him: "I shop at your store."

Eight days later, the supervisors voted to create the leather district.

During happy hour on a quiet Friday at SF Eagle, a historic queer leather bar in the heart of the district, the lights were very, very low. There were no men in har-

nesses or dog collars, no chaps, no full-face leather hoods.

Bartender Troy Dwaine said he grew up in Sacramento and drove to SoMa on weekends. Today, he rues the rising number of condos and the shrinking presence of gay bars.

"It's a different culture," Dwaine said. "People don't go out as much as they used to. ... People can just dial up a man on the phone."

"There needs to be something," he said, "not only to remember [leather culture] but to keep up awareness."

SF Eagle co-owner Lex Montiel believes that "something" could be Eagle Plaza, touted as the world's first public, municipally sanctioned gathering spot celebrating leather life and the contributions of kink to the soul of San Francisco.

The plaza was born when Montiel sat down with the principals of a local development company called Build, which is constructing three seven-story apartment towers directly across 12th Street from the Eagle.

Renderings of the project show a vibrant and tasteful pedestrian plaza with a multistory flagpole at its center flying an enormous leather pride flag. Crosswalks are striped in leather colors — black, blue and white.

The pavement is dotted with "Studs 4 Studs," oval plaques engraved with donors' names, surrounded by metal studs that mimic accents on leather garb. Friends of Eagle Plaza want to raise \$150,000 to complete the project.

Groundbreaking is expected in the spring, and Eagle Plaza should be finished in time for the Folsom Street Fair, which every September draws hundreds of thousands of fetish aficionados from around the world.

One big question all along was how to design a G-rated public celebration of a multi-X-rated lifestyle.

The challenge did not trouble developer Lou Vasquez: "It's San Francisco. Every block is like this. People know where they live."